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Tiglath Pileser III. invades Israel, takes two districts north of Samaria, causes Pekah to be killed, and establishes Hoseah on the throne, exacting from him a heavy tribute. (5) 722, Sargon captures Samaria and carries away a large portion of the population. (6) 734, Ahaz of Judah pays tribute to Tiglath Pileser III. (7) 701, Sennacherib invades Judah, takes a large number of captives, plunders the land, and receives a heavy tribute from Hezekiah. We may be certain of these dates, because the historic inscriptions on which they are based are originals; they are contemporaneous records; they are not put into a large chronological framework; they only propose to record events, without pragmatism; the events referred to are definitely dated either by the year of the king in whose reign they happened, or by the name of the *limmu*, or archont of the year; the length of each reign can be determined by the *limmi*-lists, which are for this period under consideration complete; they can be verified by the Babylonian records, the synchronistic tablets, and the Canon of Ptolemy. There are also certain dates that are measurably certain: (1) 803, Ramman Nirari III. receives tribute from Israel, when in all probability Jehoahaz was king. (2) 740, Azariah of Judah takes part in the Syrian coalition against Tiglath Pileser III. (3) 711, Azuri of Ashdod incites his neighbors to rebellion, Judah joins the league, and Sargon smites the king of Judah. (4) 675, Manasseh of Judah pays tribute to Esarhaddon. (5) 667, Manasseh of Judah pays tribute to Ashurbanipal. (6) 1400, One of the correspondents of the Assyrian king receives dispatches from his governors in Palestine informing him of the movements of Hebrews in the southern districts of the land. With the data at our command it is not impossible to compute with reasonable accuracy the date of this correspondent. But this is the least sure of all the dates.

All that can be ascertained concerning the Old Testament history through Assyriological study and investigation is of particular interest now. This information concerning comparative dates will be found useful.

The Story of Cain and Abel.* The prophetic narrator, or the compiler, has selected the narrative; he has not attempted to give a complete story, but in extracting and condensing from the tradition has qualified, abbreviated, or omitted, that which did not seem suitable to, or was in actual disagreement with, the revealed religion of Israel. Thus, we are not told the reason why divine preference was accorded to the sacrifice of Abel, nor how that preference was made known. The ancient view that an offering of animals was preferred above an offering of fruits of the earth, or that Abel had more correctly performed the ritual of the offering, are mere guess-work. In the true spirit of Israelite prophecy, he may have wished to emphasize the teaching that it was the spirit of the offerer, and not the mode of the offering, which from the first determined the acceptability of every sacrifice in the sight of God. Nor is the mode recorded by which the divine preference for Abel's sacrifice was indicated. The omission has been fancifully supplied by conjecturing that fire from heaven came down and devoured the offering of Abel. So also we are not informed as to what the sign was which God appointed for Cain. It was not a "mark set" upon him (see Revised Version), for that would have everywhere made him known instead of being a pledge to him of security. We get perhaps some idea of what the sign may have been from the rainbow which was "set" as a token for Noah. The narrator's purpose is to select from the

* By Prof. H. E. Ryle, M. A., in *Expository Times*, Feb. 1892.

early Hebrew traditions just such incidents as will most simply and effectively illustrate the teaching of the Israelite religion respecting the attributes of their God and the nature of man ; such, too, as would exemplify the steps by which primitive man declined from his true calling unto righteousness, and by which the selection of the chosen family and nation came to be ordained as the only means of the ultimate restoration of the human race. The prophet wishes to draw from the story the religious truth that : (1) the propensity to sin is transmitted from one generation to another ; (2) from the first, the opposition has subsisted between the good and the evil, between faith and self-will, between obedience and lawlessness ; (3) the obligations which we are under, one to another ; (4) God is long-suffering toward the sin, as well as compassionate toward the innocent sufferer ; (5) nothing is hid from God's knowledge ; (6) sin is no sooner committed than it comes under judgment ; (7) but the judgment is tempered by mercy.

The right view-point from which to look at the early narratives of Genesis is that of the prophet, the religious teacher, using the stories as apt vehicles of ethical and spiritual truth. This principle is well applied in the above article to the narrative of Cain and Abel.